

A quick profit on Liberty sets eludes 13,000

By Roger Boye

Dozens of hobbyists continue to insist that Uncle Sam rejected their orders for Statue of Liberty three-coin sets without sufficient cause.

But a United States Mint spokesman maintains that officials had good reasons to return 13,000 credit-card orders earlier this year.

"In almost every case the orders were rejected because the buyer erred in filling out the order form or because the buyer's credit wasn't good at that time," said Michael Brown, assistant to Mint Director Donna Pope. "There are only a few isolated cases [of rejected orders] that don't fit the pattern."

In a mail sale late last year, the mint charged \$175 for a three-coin commemorative set that included a \$5 Statue gold piece. By January, officials had sold all 500,000 gold coins allowed under federal law, and started returning the "bad orders" to would-be buyers.

In recent weeks, the three-coin sets have doubled in price as they are traded on the secondary hobby market. Of course, the spurned collectors missed out on that quick profit; many of them still are writing pointed letters to hobby publications saying that their orders were completed accurately and their credit was good.

Also, Savannah, Ga., coin dealer Anthony Mesaros—whose credit-card order was rejected—has filed a class-action suit in federal court charging the mint with breach of contract, according to a Savannah attorney handling the case.

Meanwhile, financial institutions and department stores probably will continue to offer two-coin Statue sets for several more months at the official government issue price of \$31.50. Experts say there is almost no chance that either of those coins—a copper-nickel half dollar and silver dollar—will sell out before the coinage program ends in December.

● Mint workers are receiving hundreds of orders for uncirculated coin sets as a result of a June 17 mailing to collectors whose names are on the government's computerized list.

Each 1986 set contains 10 coins, a cent through a half dollar from both the Denver and Philadelphia mints. The price is \$7 per set, same as last year's.

You can buy a set by sending a check to the United States Mint, P.O. Box 13575; Philadelphia, Pa. 19101-3575. There is no order limit.